

Dingwall and Mr Hall try to discredit the first witness and ignore the second.

But how is one to account for our present failure to locate the correct Mrs Mortimer in Brockley? It is certainly odd that the Mortimer family we contacted lived successively in Manor Road and Wickham Road, both familiar to Price as scenes of early encounters with physical mediums, and the authors of *Four Modern Ghosts* may take this as confirmation of their suspicions. But juxtapositions of this kind do occur by chance, a fact curiously illustrated in the present case. The Miss Mortimer already mentioned is now married, and lives in a road adjacent to another Wickham Road and another Manor Road!

It may well be that Price, in fulfilment of his promise to conceal the identity of the sitters, omitted some vital step in his narrative. It is not inconceivable, for example, that he was met, and taken to a house other than the one he had anticipated. An obvious alternative possibility is that the telephone number of the house was exdirectory.

If one postulates the essential truth of Price's story one is not, of course, also postulating the authenticity of the phenomena. Mr R. S. Lambert, in his Introduction to Mr Cohen's book, seems to be expressing doubts on this point, as did Harry Price himself. In his *Search for Truth* Price writes:

'I was not—and still am not—entirely satisfied with the phenomenon, striking as it was. I was persuaded to publish the report against my inclination, as the "case" was incomplete and full investigation was unwelcome and difficult.'

Evidently Price envisaged the possibility that the manifestation reported by him was a clever fraud, and this conclusion may be considered to receive strong support from the continued silence of the sitters, which seems otherwise inexplicable.

REVIEWS

CROISSET THE CLAIRVOYANT. By Jack Harrison Pollack. W. H. Allen, London, 1965. 200 pp. 21s.

Let me start by stating that, through personal experience, I am convinced that Mr Gerard Croiset is a gifted ESP subject. But, on the other hand, I doubt whether this book, concerned with various aspects of the Croiset case, could help in convincing the unbiased investigator of the reality of ESP.

The evidence offered here is far from satisfactory; an exhaustive description of the experimental conditions is generally lacking (the

latter applies especially to the precognitive empty chair tests, pp. 164-74), so that in several cases one is left with the feeling: 'Now is ESP really the only explanation left?'

Let us take the precognitive chair tests as an example. During this kind of experiment—Croiset, in advance, giving a description of the person who is going to seat himself on a certain chair in some conference hall—conditions were far too often slack and informal, greatly lowering the scientific value of these tests. In several cases, at which I was present, Croiset would stand up and point out a person, stating that it was he or she whom he had perceived precognitively. Even when this person did not sit on the chair indicated but on a chair in its neighbourhood the precognitive test was regarded as a 100% success. Many times, too, Croiset's descriptions and statements were 'psychologically' so twisted and turned around by the person who supervised the test that often by hook or by crook they were made to fit the situation and claimed as so many successes.

The so-called historic Verona chair test (pp. 170-2) is a beautiful example of how badly some of these tests have been conducted. Croiset had indicated who was going to sit on a certain chair at a meeting to be held at Verona, Italy, with Dr G. de Boni in the chair. This meeting would only be attended by those specially invited to do so. Now, during 24 hours, from 21 hours, 2nd March, 1956, till 20.15 hours the next day, Croiset was left free to do whatever he wanted. At that time Croiset was well known in Italy, he had formed a large clientèle in that country where at least once a week he held sittings for 'magnetic' healing. The person who seated herself on the chair indicated and who affirmed that every item in Croiset's description was correct, was a girl *who had not been invited*, the only non-invited person present!

Now, all this is highly suspicious! I am not suggesting that Croiset did 'plant' this girl, Rita Venturi, at the Verona meeting in order to keep up his reputation of a highly gifted ESP subject. But I do want to make it clear that he had every opportunity to do so, and this is more than enough to make the Verona experiment parapsychologically worthless.

When in the beginning of April 1957, Croiset visited me at my home in The Hague, I remarked that the Verona test was really worthless, because the experimenters had not guarded his steps during the 24 hours between his precognitive statements and their corroboration at the Verona meeting. Croiset got very annoyed with me and said I could not expect the experimenters (Prof. A. Neuhäusler and Dr G. de Boni) to hire a police-officer to guard him all that time. After a time C. calmed down and, knowing

that I was going to give a lecture at Bologna two months hence, he offered to give a chair test to be realized in the Bologna hall where I was to give my paper.

Together with Dr P. Cassoli and other parapsychologists of the Bologna group I took every measure (even to chartering a public notary to supervise the handing out of the numbers indicating the chairs to be occupied at this public meeting) to guard against the possibility of fraud.

This Bologna chair test was a complete failure! Not a single item was right.

The last test, together with several other similar ones, at least proved that Croiset cannot direct his precognitive powers at will.

The claims that Croiset's ESP powers aided the police to solve various crimes and made it possible that the culprits could be handed over to justice (pp. 53-96), have been enthusiastically supported by some and just as emphatically denied by others. In his doctor's thesis (1) the police-inspector, Dr F. Brink, stated that he had not come across a clear-cut case of a sensitive solving a crime for the police. Dr Brink was stationed at Utrecht during several years, knew Croiset and had every opportunity to know about cases claimed to be solved by sensitives. The Commissioner of Police at Utrecht, Mr Th. Roosmalen, had a distressing experience in the matter of sensitives sleuthing criminals, an experience that only heightened his scepticism in this business (2). As he wanted to see whether his scepticism was well founded or not, Mr Roosmalen requested Prof. Tenhaeff, in the presence of a witness, to indicate to him one or two cases in which Croiset had solved a crime for the police. Prof. Tenhaeff at once named two Croiset cases, one of a theft and the other one of a murder, giving at the same time all details as to locality and circumstances. The Police Commissioner then made enquiries and was informed that at the little town where Croiset was alleged to have solved a murder case no murder had taken place since at least the beginning of this century. As to the theft case, this robbery had indeed been in the hands of the police and Croiset had been invited by the person robbed to attempt to find the culprit. Croiset had pointed out a certain individual who was then promptly gaoled. However, very soon the accused was able to prove his innocence, and the police had to release him and apologize profusely for their mistake.

It is understandable that, in Holland at least, quite a number of people lost faith in the Croiset documentation, and felt that the reporting about various Croiset cases seemed indeed to be not quite free from inaccuracies. It is unfortunate that the book under review also shows some such mistakes. As an example I

could quote the case reported on pp. 131-2, known as 'An Educator's dilemma'. On p. 132 it is stated that Croiset's description of a 'revolving chair with three legs' had been found correct. But if one reads through the original documents I translated for this *Journal* (3), one finds that it was a revolving chair 'turning round on a four-legged frame'! (3, p. 246).

The above critical remarks do not mean that Croiset has never given examples of successful chair tests under reasonably good test conditions. I myself was able to conduct such a precognitive chair test with good results at The Hague on January 15 1948, while Croiset was then living at Enschede, 100 miles from The Hague. The Council of the Dutch S.P.R. at The Hague had taken every possible precaution to prevent Croiset from making his precognition come true by fraudulent means.

The person, indicated to sit on a certain chair in the large conference hall able to seat 300 persons, was found to have taken the chair next to the one indicated in the precognition but the description of her dress, hair and hairdress, etc., was found to be remarkably correct, and so were some events in her past described in Croiset's precognitive text. Several other items, however, could not be traced. The lady described was known to me, and I am certain that Croiset, whom she did not know, did not approach her to help him make his precognition come true (4).

I have often urged Croiset to have himself tested by an international Committee, so that at last an unbiased opinion could be formed about the extent of his ESP faculties. As Croiset insisted that he should himself select one or two men to sit on the Committee, a condition we could not accept, nothing came of it which I think is a great pity.

REFERENCES

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- (3) Zorab, G., 'A case of Clairvoyance?' *Journ. S.P.R.*, 38, 1955-6, 244-8.
- (4) G. Zorab, 'Proscopische Proefnemingen met G. Croiset.' *Tijdschrift voor Parapsychologie*, 1948, 16, 97-105.

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